

Michigan Department of Education Frequently Asked Questions School Reform/Redesign

1. Why did the state develop a list of persistently lowest achieving (PLA) schools?

In December 2009, the Legislature enacted several education reforms. One of these reforms requires the Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction to publish a list by September 1st of each year identifying the persistently lowest achieving public schools in the state.

2. What criteria or formula was used to identify the lowest achieving schools?

The formula mandated by state law and used in various federal education grants like the School Improvement Grant and State Fiscal Stabilization Fund grant considers student achievement over two years, academic improvement over three or four years; whether a school made Adequate Yearly Progress status over the past two years; and whether a school had a graduation rate below 60 percent for three years in a row.

3. If a school is identified as a persistently lowest achieving school, can that school appeal?

No. The set of business rules used to determine the list of PLA schools has been federally approved. The basic data elements used to determine the PLA schools list included graduation rate and assessment data. Appeal opportunities regarding those elements were provided to school districts prior to publishing the list.

4. What are the next steps once a school is identified?

The local school board has 90 days to submit a redesign plan, developed with input from the superintendent or emergency financial manager, and teacher bargaining unit, to the Department. The Department has 30 days to review the plans and accept, reject, or ask for changes. See [Intervention Plans](#) and [Timeline](#).

5. What are the four reform/redesign models?

State statute MCL 380.1280c (2) requires the implementation of one of four school reform/redesign models created in sections 14005 and 14006 of title XIV of the American recovery and reinvestment act of 2009, Public Law 111-5.

The four models are transformation, turnaround, restart, and closure. See [Four Intervention Models](#) for details.

6. What is the School Reform/Redesign Office?

The State School Reform/Redesign Officer (Officer) is appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction and serves as a Deputy Superintendent in the Michigan Department of Education.

The Officer acts as the superintendent of the **Reform/Redesign District** (RD) and has all the powers and duties described in 380.1280c (6) and the provisions of the act that would otherwise apply to the school board that previously operated the schools in the Reform District.

The [School Redesign Office \(Office\)](#) works under the direction of the Officer to achieve the following:

- Identification of PLA schools
- Notification of school boards/Public School Academy (PSA) authorizers with PLAs
- Review of redesign plans
- Notification to school boards/PSA authorizers of Plan Approval/Disapproval
- Monitoring of redesign plans
- Establishment of the Reform/Redesign District comprised of schools whose plans were disapproved, and those schools not making significant growth toward student achievement

7. Is this a state takeover?

Schools and their boards are given the opportunity to reform/redesign persistently lowest achieving schools to make significant gains in student achievement within a short time. Some sample goals:

- significant gains in student achievement within 2 years
- transformation into a high-performing organization
- return to stability
- focus
- clear reporting of progress
- not on the PLA list
- improvement 3 times greater than the state average
- feedback to parents, students, community

If the school and board cannot achieve the established goals, state statute requires the Officer to place the school into the State Reform/Redesign District and assume responsibility for the school.

8. What is our school's timeline to develop an intervention proposal?

The local school board has 90 days from August 16, 2010 to submit a reform/redesign plan to the Department (11-16-10). There are interim deadlines at 30 days (9-16-10) and 60 days (10-18-10) to allow for feedback from MDE. [See Timeline](#)

9. Will there be technical assistance in developing proposals?

Webinars are scheduled for August 17th and September 1st. A technical assistance meeting for those new to the PLA school list is scheduled for August 24, 2010 from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., at the Lansing Center, Conference Room C

10. When will we know if a school's plan is approved?

The Department must complete its review of plans and notification of schools by December 18, 2010.

11. What if a school's plan isn't approved?

The Office will begin discussions with the school district to place the school into the State Reform/Redesign District.

12. What is the timeline for implementation?

According to state statute, implementation must begin with the 2011-12 school year, but the district may begin implementation as soon as the completed plan is approved. There is usually a need for extensive professional development and internal policy and procedural change that can begin before the start of the next school year.

13. Will this affect the role of the school board? Superintendent?

Since this level of transformative reform will involve policy and procedural changes at every level, this will affect the work of both the superintendent and school board as well as affecting all staff in the identified school. If the school is ultimately placed into the State Reform/Redesign District, the superintendent and school board will no longer have authority over the school.

14. Does this make our school a charter school?

While the school is under the supervision of the SRRO, the school remains part of the local school district. If the school is placed into the Reform District, the school becomes part of that district and is subject to additional reforms, such as management by an external organization with expertise in school turnaround. Once significant improvement is achieved, the school may be returned to the local district. Decisions will be made individually for the benefit of the students in each school.

15. When would a school possibly be put into the statewide reform district?

If the school and board cannot achieve the established goals (see question 7) or if the school does not submit an approvable redesign plan, state statute requires the Officer to place the school into the State Reform/Redesign District and assume responsibility for the school.

16. How does a school get off the list?

If the Officer determines that a public school that implemented a reform/redesign model has made significant improvement in pupil achievement and should be released from the measures imposed under MCL 380.1280c, the officer may recommend this to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI). If the SPI agrees with the determination and recommendation, the SPI may release the public school from the measures that have been imposed.

17. What happens if our school doesn't make it off the PLA schools list?

If a school, after implementing an intervention model, does not achieve its goals additional reform efforts may be required including school restart or closure. The dramatic, rapid changes needed in these schools will require significant changes in the school climate, policy and procedures and may require the assistance of a lead partner experienced in school turnaround.

18. What type of assistance will there be to implement intervention plans?

The Department has provided several resources accessible at http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_56811---,00.html. The Department is exploring partnerships with several foundations, universities, and corporations. More details will be provided in the near future.

19. Will there be money to assist with the implementation of intervention plans?

School Improvement Grants are available on a competitive basis and will be awarded to schools that submit plans meeting all SIG requirements. There are no other new funds available for implementation, but Title I, Title II, and section 31a funds may all be re-purposed to support the implementation of a redesign plan.

20. What is the parent/community role?

Parent and community involvement are required by some of the interventions. The redesign plan will outline the level and type of involvement to garner the support of the community for the redesign.

21. What is the monitoring process?

The monitoring process will include visits to PLA schools, regular review of cash management systems, phone calls and monthly reports to track implementation progress.

22. How would this affect pupil transportation? Special Education? Athletics?

Instructional and non-instructional services will continue as described in the school's redesign plan. If the school is placed into the Reform District, instructional and non-instructional services will become the responsibility of the Reform District.

23. Can a parent move a student to another school?

Schools of choice statutes were not affected by MCL 380.1280c.